

Message Text

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44

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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R 021148Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2992

INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMCONSUL MADRAS

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 2095

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IN, CE

SUBJ: SRI LANKA WATCHES INDIAN SITUATION QUIETLY

REF: COLOMBO 1965

1. MOST OBSERVERS ARE IMPRESSED WITH MILDNESS OF SRI LANKA'S OFFICIAL AND UNOFFICIAL REACTION TO IMPOSITION OF EMERGENCY REGULATIONS AND ARREST OF OPPSOTION LEADERS IN INDIA. GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED AND INFLUENCED PRESS HAVE REPORTED EVERY SHADE OF INTERNATIONAL REACTION, BOTH FAVORABLE AND CRITICAL, BUT DOMESTIC EDITORIALIZATION HAS BEEN EXCEPTIONALLY SPARSE AND NON-COMMITTAL. INFORMAL CONVERSATIONS WITH GSL OFFICIALS, JOURNALISTS, BUSINESSMEN, AND OTHER LEADERS REFLECT SIMILAR ABIVALENT ATTITUDE. HIGH-RANKING MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS OFFICIAL SUMMED UP GENERAL FEELING: NO
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APPARENT IMPACT AS YET ON GOOD GOI-GSL

RELATIONS OR ON THE TWO LADY PRIME MINISTERS' GOOD PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP. THERE IS SOME FEAR, HOWEVER, MRS. GANDHI'S POSITION MAY BE ERODED OVER TIME AND THAT IF CENTER'S AUTHORITY IS LATER REDUCED, THIS COULD GIVE TAMIL NADU INCREASED OPPORTUNITY TO ASSIST TAMIL SEPARATISM IN NORTHERN SRI LANKA. OPINION ALSO EXPRESSED THAT RECOURSE TO AUTHORITARIAN TENDENCIES IN INDIA MAY ENCOURAGE SRI LANKA ADVOCATES OF SIMILAR APPROACH. AT PRESENT, SRI LANKA STANDS ALONE AS SOUTH ASIAN COUNTRY WHICH HAS BEEN ABLE TO MAINTAIN CONTINUOUSLY DEMOCRATIC FORM OF GOVERNMENT, HOWEVER IMPERFECT, SINCE INDEPENDENCE.

2. PRINCIPAL IMPACT ON US PRESENCE HERE AS RESULT INDIAN DEVELOPMENTS RELATES TO ALLEGATIONS THAT CIA OR UNITED STATES IS PART OF CONSPIRACY TO UNDERMINE MRS. GANDHI. THIS HAS PROVIDED SOME FUEL FOR LEFTIST ATTEMPTS TO USE US AS WHIPPING BOY. IN LARGE FRAMEWORK, THERE IS CEYLONESE CONCERN THAT IF MRS. GANDHI HAS MISJUDGED HER ABILITY TO CONTROL SITUATION THIS COULD UNLEASH TRAIN OF EVENTS WHICH MIGHT DISRUPT PRESENT GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH INDIA WHICH GSL BELIEVES IS BEST FOR SRI LANKA. AT THIS STATE, REACTION COMBINES REGRET, FASCINATION, AND SHEER INABILITY TO PREDICT FUTURE IMPACT. SILENCE, THEN, IS APPROPRIATE.
VAN HOLLEN

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